**Flexible Leadership: Maimonides and other flexible leaders**

**Abstract**

This paper deals with a flexible leadership style. A leader’s flexibility is expressed in a multi-dimensional structure that contains a variety of dynamics and context-dependent adaptations. A leader who possesses these abilities can inspire a wide range of people to trust and follow him. As illustrations to flexible leaders, we address mainly to Maimonides' leadership style. Maimonides is one of the most significant figures for the Jewish people. Beyond the quantity, quality, and depth of Maimonides’ writings, the wide range of people with whom he corresponded teaches us about his distinctive leadership ability. We also address briefly to two other great leaders, Buddha from the religion area and Warren Buffet from the economic area. These leaders managed to appeal to and influence varied populations.

This ability can be explained and demonstrated using the structure of Flexible Leadership (F.L). These examples provide an opportunity for research on other leaders by using this model.

.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Key Words:**

Maimonides, Flexible Leadership, *Guide for the Perplexed, Mishneh Torah*, Epistle, Buddha, Buffett,

**לעורכים- האם להשאיר הפסקה הבאה כפסקה נוספת או לחבר עם האבסטרקט?**

This article deals with a flexible leadership style. As an illustration of flexible leaders, we deal at length with Maimonides' leadership, one of the most significant figures for the Jewish people, and briefly with two other leaders Buddha who is the central figure in Buddhism and Warren Buffett who is a major figure in the global economy. These leaders have been able to evacuate and influence diverse populations. The leadership of the three through Flexible Leadership (FL). These examples provide an opportunity for research on other leaders through this model.The F.C. model can be used to understand leaders in various fields. This leadership style offers an effective and ethical way to lead others.

**Flexible Leadership**

**Flexible Leadership According to (**Kaiser, Overfield, 2010).  **means adapting the leadership style, method or approach to diverse and changing contexts. Flexible leadership requires a broad repertoire of behavior that is compatible with many types of situations and the ability to know when to do what, and skillfully to do what needs to be done.**

**According to** Yukl (2008, April) Flexible Leadership Theory uses ideas from several areas: leadership, human resources management, strategic management, organizational theory, and organizational change.

**According to** (Yukl, Mahsud, 2010) Flexible leadership can occur in several different contexts. The resilient leader has the ability to balance competing values and opposite behaviors in a way that fits a complex situation.

Novicevic, Williams, Abraham, Gibson, Smothers, and Crawford (2011) identify three types of leadership: The first is charismatic leadership. The second is ideological leadership. The third is pragmatic leadership, which refers to the ability to initiate change with a profound understanding of social interaction. According to Wilkes, Yip, and Simmons (2011), performance leadership and performance management are fundamentally different; managing performance takes place in the context of known situations, whereas leading performance occurs in unknown or changing environments.

Jia, Chen, Mei, and Wu (2018) find that transformational leadership enhances

performance of organizational innovation, while transactional leadership reduces it.

According to Jones and Nieto (2015) More than any other organizing initiative, people development is the most powerful tool To handle change management, knowledge management and flexibility.

According to Landin (2017). The foundation for empowered leadership is the ability to adapt thought, action and response to complex reality. Leadership is a constant challenge and contains the ability to respond compassionately to failure, courageous training in times of crisis and sincere praise for success and therefore the basis of effective leadership is flexibility: in thought, response and action. The article emphasizes that we are in a period of rapid and significant change in many areas of reality (political, cultural and industrial), so leaders must be able to adapt to this demanding reality. Flexible leaders must act appropriately. To trust the leader, followers need to trust and know that they are working for them and in a way that fits the particular situation.

In exploring the beneficial effects of flexible leadership and how they may be developed, Baron, Rouleau, Grégoire, and Baron (2018) find that several dimensions of mindfulness—the psychological process of bringing non-judgmental attention to the present moment—are positively correlated with flexible leadership. In the past, flexible leadership has also been attributed to cognitive skills and/or emotional intelligence. The authors suggest that mindfulness techniques may help leaders develop the flexibility necessary to successfully cope with changing situations. While the present article does not deal with this or other techniques for enhancing F.C, it does address the characteristics of F.C. These include the ability to navigate ever-changing situations, which require concentration and focus, and which cannot always be understood using knowledge from the past. Furthermore, new situations cannot be judged on the basis of past precedents.

Hurtado and Mukherji (2015) present a construct of a leader’s cognitive flexibility, referencing *The Leader’s Brain* (Heemsbergen, 2006). In that book, Heemsbergen emphasizes how nonconscious processes play a strong role in the ability to view the world from various perspectives. Hurtado and Mukherji (2015) also refer to Langer’s comprehensive study (1997) on ways that categories of perception influence mindful learning and increase the potential for adaptive change through using multiple perspectives to assess a situation.

Their article also refers to *Your Brain and Business: The Neuroscience of Great Leaders* (Pillay, 2011) in which brain science is used to illuminate issues related to cognitive flexibility. As Hurtado and Mukherji (2015, p. 9) explain, cognitive flexibility includes abilities such as sense-making and framing, the ability to lead processes of change, persuasive communication and the ability to motivate others. They suggest that cognitive flexibility and its corresponding abilities require self-awareness, other-awareness, task-awareness and situational awareness

Background to Maimonides and his leadership

Maimonides (1138-1204) was one of the central Jewish philosophers, an important *posek* (person determining religious laws), an astronomer, and a polymath. He was born in Cordoba, Spain and fled  with his family, to Fez, Morocco, then to the Land of Israel, and from there to Egypt. He lived in a predominantly Muslim culture (Goodman, 2000; Halbertal, 2013; Kiener, 2011, Seeskin, 2017; Stroumsa, 2004, 2008).

One of the most influential figures in the Jewish world, he was a skilled physician (Shemesh, 2018), influencing and inspiring a wide, diverse range of people (Jacob, 2011). This article analyzes his influence through his ideologies, management style, morality, leadership principles, personal qualities, and ethics (Ahn, Ettner, & Loupin, 2012; Dion, 2012).

In this article, we demonstrate that Maimonides can be characterized by a leadership style called Flexible leadership, which enabled him to affect people in a dynamic and clear manner, adapted to the particular audience. The way he communicated his ideas depended upon the situation, context, and target audience. He had a creative ability to convey one message in different ways and to relate to the same issue in different ways. He could exchange an old perspective with a new one, identify a situation, adapt his proposed solution to it, and offer a new perspective on the changing reality. He saw his responsibility as not only bringing his target audiences closer to him, but also bringing himself closer to them, and adapting his message accordingly.

**Maimonides: Spiritual Leadership and Flexible Leadership**

An examination of Maimonides’ leadership teaches us that a flexible leadership style was embodied by leaders in the past, long before the current terminology came into use. Maimonides was a philosopher and well-respected religious authority. People turned to him for spiritual guidance to help them act in a righteous manner and to follow a path of truth. In fact, Maimonides was viewed as a type of mediator; he was perceived as an intermediary between the metaphysical and physical world, between God and man. The crises he addressed were related to his spiritual mission (Halkin & Hartman, 1993 p. 58, 60,131, 151).

Maimonides - Between Dogmatics and Pragmatism.

Maimonides' activities were broad and if we refer to a variety of his activities, we can find contradictions in the nature of his activities. On the one hand he has flexibility and ability to adapt to a given situation and specific case. On the other hand, Maimonides established dogmatics of the Jewish faith. Until Maimonides there was no set of compulsory beliefs and certainly not so clearly and obligingly.The monumental project "Mishnah Torah", which is the enactment of all the laws of the Jewish religion, essentially eliminates the Talmudic debate and the basic ideal of the Talmudic culture of controversy. According to Kellner, (Kellner, 2016, p.60) Maimonides was the first (known to us) Jew who determined, emphatically, that Judaism was based on beliefs, that is, dogmatics. Maimonides was one of the first to see In Judaism "religion" similar to the modern meaning of the word. Kellner also adds that Maimonides was the first Orthodox Jew, in the technical sense of The word. (Kellner, 2016, p.60).

Seemingly, there is a contradiction between the idea that Maimonides is the significant founder of Jewish dogmatism (Kellner), and Maimonides' flexible leadership. The claim that Maimonides is flexible does not mean that Maimonides want to encourage people to be flexible. It can be argued that it is precisely mental flexibility that has caused Maimonides' to have a deep cognitive understanding that most humans need dogmatics. It should be noted that in this article we mainly emphasize Maimonides' leadership style and not the question of encouraging people to be flexible. However, the encouragement of thought flexibility can certainly be seen in Maimonides. in his philosophical book " *Guide for the Perplexed* " which is dedicated to great students it is clear that Maimonides offers a wide range of ideas to excellent students, and this is the exact opposite of dogmatics. Definitely easy to see from the book that the excellent students have to maneuver between the many chapters and the variety of ideas and by doing so, they design their worldview.( Kreisel, 2012, p.264).  It should be noted that Maimonides believes that only flexible-minded people can swim in the sea of diverse knowledge that Maimonides brings up in his book. Moreover, he guides them to flexible thought as a condition for understanding the depth of the book and its secret The excellent students are not obligated to accept dogmatics, but must be open-minded, active and flexible in seeking the truth.

**Flexible Leadership as a Model for Analyzing Leaders**

The analysis of Maimonides' leadership style, Buddha and Buffett, demonstrates that this model can also be used to examine other leaders from different fields and to understand the relationship between their use of this structure and their success and ability to influence others Leaders from various disciplines and to understand the relationship between their use of this structure and their success and ability to influence others. In other words, this model is not limited to current leadership but is equally relevant to past and future leaders. This broad perspective enables us to explore and sharpen definition of additional principles of leadership. It can assist in the study of leadership, as well as in the study of leadership in general and in the study of F.C in particular.

Abilities such as sense-making and framing, leading change processes, communicating persuasively, and motivating others are grounded in the practice of mindfulness. Mindfulness is the ability to self-regulate at the emotional level, and it requires clarity of perception and thinking, and emotional intelligence. Mindfulness and emotional intelligence are exercised in several dimensions, which include self-awareness, other-awareness, task-awareness, and situational awareness.

## **Expressions of F.C in Maimonides’ Writings**

“*A man shall always be as soft as a reed and shall not be as stiff as a cedar.” (Ethics of the Fathers*)

Several of Maimonides’ prominent personal qualities and methods of influence are instructive about his tremendous impact. F.C is Maimonides’ dominant quality. His writings indicate an understanding of the psychological complexity that occurs when people encounter an approach that differs from their own. Reflecting this understanding, Maimonides wrote in such a way that made the reader feel comfortable. His flexibility is demonstrated in his ability to adapt his communication to his audience. This skill works in two ways. Maimonides was able to adapt himself to his target audience, while at the same time successfully bringing his target audience closer to his viewpoint (Hoffman & Frost, 2006; Kiener, 2011).

**Polemics Surrounding Maimonides’ Religious and Philosophical Work**

While Maimonides is one of the most significant figures for the Jewish people, like other historical figures who were “ahead of their time,” his writings aroused great debate and controversy (Friedberg, 2002; Silver, 2012). Some of the great Jewish sages disagreed with Maimonides’ rulings on matters of Jewish law (*halacha*), which he sometimes determined independently, without bringing the traditional sources to support his verdicts. He arranged laws in an order that differs from the one that appears in the Talmud (the central text of [Rabbinic Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbinic_Judaism)). Maimonides’ affinity for philosophy aroused the anger of many sages, who viewed him as a grave danger to the tradition. They banned his writings and even denounced him to the authorities. The controversy over Maimonides' writings began during his lifetime. It related to the intensive introduction of Greek philosophy into Jewish thought, as reflected in *The Guide for the Perplexed* and *HaMadda* (Knowledge), which is part of the *Mishneh Torah*. Maimonides’ innovative approach aroused the wrath of many sages, who regarded him as a danger to tradition. The debate over Maimonides’ work began in his lifetime (Langermann, 2000; Friedberg, 2002). In Montpellier, France 1232, some forty years after the publication of the Guide for the Perplexed, a boycott of Maimonides books was imposed in the Jewish communities of France and Spain. This led (according to the testimonies of Avraham ben Maimonides and David Kimchi) to the confiscation and burning of his books (Dobbs-Weinstein, 1997, p. 275). In the next section, we refer to some of Maimonides’ specific works, namely the *Mishneh Torah (Book of the Laws of Religion)* and his philosophical book *Guide for the Perplexed.* Theseare Maimonides’ two greatest writings that solidified his name both in the Jewish world and with worldwide philosophers. We also refer to several of his letters.

The juxtaposition of his two greatest projects, *Mishneh Torah* and *Guide for the Perplexed,* demonstrates that Maimonides was flexible enough to simultaneously be one of the greatest arbiters (*poskim*), whose rulings were clear and almost unequivocal, and also a teacher willing to embark on a journey together with his ‘perplexed’ students and intellectual equals in a search for Truth (Lorberbaum, 2002).

***Mishneh Torah:*** This monumental work is a comprehensive [code](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legal_code) of [Jewish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judaism) [religious law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_law) presented “in clear and concise terms, so that the entire Oral Law could be organized in each person’s mouth without questions or objections” (*Mishneh Torah*, Introduction [1](javascript:doFootnote('1a901656');)). Maimonides wrote this book both for people with basic knowledge of Jewish religious law as well as for those with a broad and deep understanding of it; in other words, for the Jewish people as a whole. Through this book, Maimonides made the Torah (the central holy book of the Jewish people, which includes the religious commandments) more widely accessible, enabling more people to learn Torah, to understand *halacha,* and to live a religious life more independently. Consequently, the sage and the layman had access to the same knowledge. Even if the sage was better informed, the gap between them was reduced, and the difference became quantitative rather than qualitative. The sages now were no longer an exclusive and superior guild. This was a dramatic shift within Judaism. Because it was so dramatic, it was explosive. In part, this was because it raised the possibility that the spiritual aristocracy of the Jewish people would be considerably diminished by the empowerment of ordinary people (Fenton, 1982).

It appears that in matters of Jewish law (*halacha*), which is expressed in daily life, Maimonides believed in the ability of the common person to observe the Torah with almost no mediation. *Mishneh Torah* is the ultimate expression of the ability to lead processes of change on the basis of flexible thinking, a clear and deep perception of reality, and a vision for the future. The change that Maimonides led was paradigmatic, making knowledge, which until then had been available only to the intellectual elite, accessible to the entire Jewish public. In this book, Maimonides was able to lead processes of change, communicate persuasively in order to motivate people to adopt a new idea, and to consolidate all the Jewish laws and commandments in one comprehensive monumental work.

## ***Guide for the Perplexed*:** The *Guide for the Perplexed* was written for a religious person with persistent and fundamental questions and difficulties. It was aimed at people whose psychological character was in tension with religion and religious obedience, and those who did not find answers within traditional explanations. Until Maimonides, such people had no source of explanation within Jewish thought (Altmann, 1972).

In *Guide for the Perplexed*, Maimonides accompanies and guides his students and then lets them continue on alone, placing his hope and trust in them. As he wrote, “This is all that I thought proper to discuss in this treatise, and which I considered useful for men like you. I hope that, by the help of God, you will, after due reflection, comprehend all the things which I have treated here” (Maimonides, 1910, p. 576). Whereas the *Mishneh Torah* was written for the entire Jewish people, the *Guide for the Perplexed* is like God’s approach to Abraham in Genesis, in the sense that Abraham had a special personality and a holistic intellect, and therefore communication with him was on a different level and in a different style than with others (Hoch & Keller, 2012).

The writing in the *Guide for the Perplexed* is an expression of Maimonides’ vast knowledge of philosophy as well as an expression of his high level of emotional intelligence when addressing individuals facing with a crisis of faith. Maimonides wrote the *Guide for the Perplexed* with other-awareness, self-awareness, and an understanding that he had a unique ability to help the “perplexed” religious person. **Maimonides’ Letters:** Maimonides’ various writings illustrate the substantial efforts he made to offer knowledge to a wide range of people, including Jewish community leaders who held authority, political power, and influence. In his efforts to make the Torah widely accessible and to encourage and instill hope among those struggling to understand or accept it, Maimonides corresponded with congregation leaders and answered their personal letters. He also corresponded with private individuals, heartening them, contributing to their personal development, and trying to alleviate their difficulties. In this section, we demonstrate, by analyzing his words, that his advice and recommendations and the way he relates to those he writes to are close to the FLC model presented above.

***Letter on Apostasy*:** Maimonides’ approach allowed a Jew to acknowledge Muhammad’s prophecy yet remain part of the Jewish people (Soloveitchik, 1980). This was unprecedented. The following is the background: At the time, Moroccan Jews were required by local law to acknowledge Muhammad’s prophecy and declare, “There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet.” According to Jewish tradition, a person who makes this statement was no longer considered part of the Jewish people, based on the biblical statement, “*And the person who does it with an uplifted hand, this person shall be cut off*”(Numbers 15:30).

Maimonides opposed the traditional religious concept that a person who leaves the Jewish religion cannot ever return to it. Based on verses from the Torah and Talmud, Maimonides differentiates between those who leave the religion voluntarily and those are coerced to do so. Maimonides was not interested in being a revolutionary in this matter, but rather to reinforce what he saw as an accepted path. In our opinion, he was an innovator who tried to present his decisions as if they were based on old and accepted ideas:

Throughout the Talmud, we find that a person who was compelled to commit a transgression is exempt from punishment in accordance with the laws of the Torah, for example: “God exempts the transgressor under compulsion,” (Babylonian Talmud, Nedarim 27, 1). This is based on the verse: “For as a man attacks his friend and murders him, so is this thing” (Deuteronomy 22: 26). (Stitskin, 1977, p. 115)

Here Maimonides’ leadership qualities are appropriate to the F.C model, which takes into account the special and unprecedented (at the time) circumstances. Maimonides teaches ethical action in a complex reality. Of course, this advice would not have to be given in an ideal world, in which it is easy to know right from wrong. However, in practice, there is often tension between religious commitment and real life. Dealing with this complex dilemma requires a high level of self-awareness, willingness to offer an unconventional response to a complex situation, and the ability to convince others to accept this response (Landin, 2017). Maimonides’ advice is not to follow the extreme and erroneous thinking of “all or nothing,” but rather to try to do one’s best within the existing limitations.

Another example of Maimonides clarifying his opposition to extremism and offering a realistic course of action is found in the following quote:

A person who is caught in this persecution should conduct himself according to the following lines: let him set his sights on observing as many of the mitzvot (religious commandments) has he can. If he transgressed often or desecrated the Sabbath, he should still not carry what he is not allowed to carry...Let him be as careful about observing the mitzvot as he can. (Maimonides quoted in Finkel, 1996, p. 74)

Thus, Maimonides describes a type of “conversion” to Islam in which Jews only make a statement acknowledging Muhammad’s divine mission but do not commit any acts of idolatry. Maimonides’ flexibility allowed one to escape the death penalty and still continue to be part of the Jewish people. It seems that such flexibility in the face of a complex reality receives sympathy and appreciation today, with the benefit of hindsight; during Maimonides’ lifetime, however, it was perceived with suspicion and as heresy. His letter indicates a high level of self-awareness, situational awareness, and the understanding that he was an individual who could convince others, as described in papers dealing with flexible leadership (Kaiser, Overfield, 2010, Yukl 2008, April, (Yukl, Mahsud, 2010) Baron, Rouleau, Grégoire, Baron (2018); Wilkes, Yip, Simmons, (2011); Landin, (2017); Hurtado and Mukherji (2015)

## ***Letter to the Sages of Lunel:*** In this letter to the community of Lunel, France, Maimonides expresses his desire to raise the generation of potential leadership that will follow his death. Maimonides wrote this letter in response to twenty-two questions posed by Rabbi Jonathan Hakohen on a variety of subjects arising from the *Mishneh Torah*, as well as to a request by the scholars of Lunel for a Hebrew translation of *The Guide* *to the Perplexed* (Stitskin, 1975).

Maimonides communicated the urgency of the Jewish people’s catastrophic spiritual state to the sages of Lunel. He then empowered them with the role of spiritual leadership. He remarked that during this difficult time, people did not ‘stand upright’ with Moses’ teachings, in the words of Rav Ashi in the Babylonian Talmud:

Be therefore strong and fortify yourself for the sake of our people and our God. Strive to be courageous men, for everything depends on you. Upon you devolves the command of fulfilling the levirate precept. Do not rely upon me to carry on the battle as I can no longer navigate. I am an old man and grey, not from aging but from a weak, worn out body. May the Creator support your efforts and render you a famous name and praise you in the midst of the earth.

(Stitskin, 1975, p. 191)

Maimonides gave the sages of Lunel the feeling that the fate and future of the Jewish People depended on them, that there were no others who could carry out this holy work, and that they were carrying the holy scepter of the Torah. He encouraged them and expressed his belief that they would find their own ways to lead and to teach the Torah.

Flexible leadership, in this case, is expressed in the ability to delegate authority and to encourage other people to take leadership, (Jones and Nieto, 2015) even if they take a different direction. This letter is an expression of Maimonides’ self-awareness and clear understanding of the complex reality being faced by future generations. Maimonides led a process of change manifested in his effort to support and empower new leaders of the Jewish people from his unique source of authority. This letter demonstrates the characteristics of “ability to lead change processes, ability to communicate persuasively and the ability to motivate” as described in papers dealing with flexible leadership (Kaiser, Overfield, 2010, Yukl 2008, April, (Yukl, Mahsud, 2010) Baron, Rouleau, Grégoire, Baron (2018); Wilkes, Yip, Simmons, (2011); Landin, (2017); Hurtado and Mukherji (2015)

***Letter to Yemen*:** Maimonides also wrote a letter of encouragement to the Yemenite Jews, who were at that time in a great spiritual crisis resulting from decrees against Jews and the appearance of a false messiah (Mazuz, 2014). Through their leaders, Maimonides encouraged them with the following words:

To the honored, great, and holy Master and Teacher, Jacob, wise and genial, dear and revered sage, son of the honored, great, and holy Master and Teacher, Nathaniel Fayyumi, distinguished Prince of Yemen, president of its congregations, leader of its communities, may the spirit of God rest upon him, and upon all his associates and upon all the scholars of the communities of Yemen. (Halkin & Hartman, 1993, p. 93)

Maimonides wished to convey his words through the mediation of the leader of Yemenite Jewry in order to encourage and strengthen their broken spirit. His involvement in Yemen was not limited to giving advice from afar. His advice involved speaking against Muhammed to strengthen the Jews there, which posed a risk to his own safety:

I beg you to send a copy of this missive to every community in the cities and hamlets, in order to strengthen the people in their faith and to put them on their feet. Read it at public gatherings and in private, and you will thus become a public benefactor. Take adequate precautions lest its contents be divulged to the Gentiles by an evil person and mishap overtake us (God spare us therefrom).

When I began writing this letter, I had some misgivings about it, but they were overruled by my conviction that the public welfare takes precedence over one’s personal safety. Moreover, I am sending it to a personage such as you, “and the secret of the Lord may be entrusted to those who fear Him.” Our sages, the successors of the prophets, assured us that persons engaged in a religious mission will meet with no disaster (Pesahim 8b). What more important religious mission is there than this. Peace be unto all Israel. Amen. (Halkin & Hartman 1993, p. 131)

Maimonides’ awareness of the crucial task of encouraging and inspiring the community of Yemen, which was in a dire religious and social situation, as shown in this letter, characterizes his ability to motivate and his sensitivity “to task-awareness and situational awareness” as described in papers dealing with flexible leadership (Kaiser, Overfield, 2010, Yukl 2008, April, (Yukl, Mahsud, 2010) Baron, Rouleau, Grégoire, Baron (2018); Wilkes, Yip, Simmons, (2011); Landin, (2017); Hurtado and Mukherji (2015)

Maimonides’ did not write only to heads of congregations and communities. He also answered letters to private individuals of various types, from laymen to sages. These letters, several of which are described below, show Maimonides’ adaptability to the audience.

***Letter to Joseph Ibn*** ***Gaber:*** Maimonides’ ability to make the Torah accessible and flexible can be seen in his letter to Joseph Ibn Gaber, an ordinary Jew from Baghdad who did not know Hebrew well. Maimonides sent Ibn Gaber a relatively long letter, encouraging him and giving him advice regarding the appropriate way to continue his studies, as it was clear that Ibn Gaber was not an ideal student. Maimonides adapted his advice to suit the man’s simple level, and suggested that he refrain from dealing with major philosophical questions. He even allowed Ibn Gaber to hold beliefs that Maimonides rejected as false (Kraemer, 2008, pp. 415-416), indicating his recognition that not everyone is able to understand abstract philosophical thoughts. Maimonides gave people advice on how and what to believe according to their intellectual level.

Maimonides understood this individual’s abilities and limitations, and presented him with a personalized educational program, even though Maimonides clearly objected to some of his own recommendations. This is consistent with Maimonides’ traits of empathy and caring. We learn how Maimonides perceived his letter to Ibn Gaber from another letter he sent to his disciple, Joseph Ben Yehuda, in which he mentions this matter. The second letter indicates that Maimonides was aware of the “negative visibility” of writing a letter to a simple person, and that it could be misconstrued that he was not ‘particularly busy.’ His response to Ibn Gaber’s appeal, and the personalized education program that included the possibility of adopting foreign beliefs, demonstrates his flexibility and his desire to make knowledge accessible even to the common person.

Maimonides was aware that Ibn Gaber was not a scholar, so it was appropriate to guide him in a way that was suitable to his abilities and to present him only with challenges that he had a chance of meeting with success. With deep emotional understanding and awareness of the specific situation, Maimonides built a curriculum specific to Ibn Gaber, which differed from Maimonides’ conventional approach, and was adapted to the situation. The way in which Maimonides guided Ibn Gaber demonstrates Maimonides’ deep understanding of the individual, his emotional intelligence, and his “ability to self-regulate at the emotional level,” which are as described in papers dealing with flexible leadership (Baron, Rouleau, Grégoire, Baron (2018); Wilkes, Yip, Simmons, (2011); Landin, (2017); Hurtado and Mukherji

(2015) as characteristics of Flexible Leadership.

***Letter to Ovadiah the Proselyte*:** Another famous appeal is to the convert Ovadiah Ger Zedek (Kellner, 2016). (The term *ger zedek* is Hebrew for “righteous convert” and can be used to refer to any person who became a Jew for all intents and purposes.) Maimonides teaches Ovadiah Ger Zedek how to pray like the rest of the Jewish people, while acknowledging that his prayer may differ somewhat from that of other Jews (Birnbaum, 2005). It was important for Maimonides that Ovadiah should not feel inferior, but that his thoughts and his activity would be enhanced through self-awareness. For example, Maimonides suggested that it would be permissible for Ovadiah to adapt the wording of prayers that speak from the perspective of the Jewish nation, such as those that praise God for “bringing *us* out of the land of Egypt” while at the same time noting that Ovadiah would be allowed to use the original wording of the prayers, because he had “come under the wings of the Divine” and there was no difference between him and someone born a Jew (Kobler, 1978, pp. 195-197).

This is an example of how Maimonides was prepared to adapt the prayer text so that it would be perceived as natural and in a language with which Ovadiah felt comfortable. This requires flexibility of thought, thinking outside the box. Through emotional intelligence and awareness of Ovadiah’s special situation, Maimonides opened up a number of possibilities to him and treated him in a welcoming and gentle manner.

The way in which Maimonides guided Ibn Gaber and Ovadiah reflects his deep understanding of humans and shows Maimonides’ emotional intelligence and self-regulation, which are as described in papers dealing with flexible leadership(Kaiser, Overfield, 2010, Yukl 2008, April, (Yukl, Mahsud, 2010) Baron, Rouleau, Grégoire, Baron (2018); Wilkes, Yip, Simmons, (2011); Landin, (2017); Hurtado and Mukherji (2015as characteristics of Flexible Leadership.

**Maimonides as a Prototype for the Flexible Leadership Model**

Since relying on past knowledge is not sufficient to provide solutions to new situations and dilemmas, there is a need for flexible thinking in order to deal with new problems. There is a need for openness and courage to think “outside the box” (Baron, Rouleau, Grégoire, & Baron, 2018)*.* In the significant decisions facing us, the past cannot help, because the situation is unprecedented. The results of the response to that reality are not guaranteed at all. Maimonides’ solutions are an expression of flexibility (Wilkes, Yip, & Simmons, 2011) and understanding that conventional solutions may be irrelevant, and that the new reality cries out for an innovative way of thinking (Jia, Chen, Mei, & Wu, 2018). This flexibility may provoke fear, since it is a change from the traditional course and raises suspicion that one change will lead to instability and a total break from convention. When such approaches come from a religious leader, innovation can be interpreted as a reform that deviates from the traditional path, as a distortion of sacred scripture. Creative and innovative thought simultaneously raises the suspicion of heresy while also instilling sympathy and appreciation for flexibility in adapting to new situations.

One of the practical expressions of flexibility is the ability to make knowledge accessible and adapt it to different realities and to different people (Lucas, van Wee, & Maat, 2016; Peters & Bradbard, 2010). Maimonides was aware that conventional solutions were irrelevant to the problems of his generation, and the new reality required completely different thought. To overcome current and future distress and provide solutions to people with specific difficulties, Maimonides proposed solutions that reflected flexibility of thought and the ability to stretch the possibilities to extremes without destroying their foundations.

When Maimonides addressed audiences and individuals, he placed them in the center, and adapted his words to their level, needs, and style, thus creating a unique relationship with each group and individual. The examples and analyses presented in the article demonstrate that many aspects of Maimonides’ leadership style correspond to the F.C model.

The article shows how the model of flexible leadership is reflected in Maimonides' leadership style. Maimonides is probably not the first to fit the model. A significant reason why we chose to engage in Maimonides is because of the vast and varied amount of his writings, but, The model of flexible leadership could be used to research various figures - from peoples leaders, through religious founders, to today's leaders of social and economic change. We will briefly refer to two figures worthy of in-depth examination is Buddha, the central figure in Buddhism, who lived more than 1500 years before Maimonides and billionaire and renowned investor Warren Buffett who lived 800 years after Maimonides. Both seem to be characterized by the flexible cognitive leadership model.

The reference to Buddha and Buffett is only an opening for future research

It is possible that “rules”,in terms of Buddha itself, were very open and flexible. Buddha made every effort to make his ideas available to the diverse people he taught. and this manifests, in what we call, flexible leadership. In addition, the article *Don't just sit there, do something: A theological interpretation of the buddha as political activist and peacemaker* claims that Buddha's creativity sometimes caused confusion among the monks, because his flexible and non-dogmatic words seemed to contradict themselves. (Skye, 2016).

The leadership flexibility learned from Buddha is also related to organizational aspects. The balance element can be attributed as a leadership trait to the middle path recommended by Buddha. It's simply a balanced approach to life. Leaders in this way will communicate effectively with employees, enabling a flexible atmosphere suitable for change and innovation. A major idea in Buddhism is the understanding of the infinite transformation of reality. Everything is changing and there is no fear of it at all, but it has to flow with it. This approach envelops change and innovation and does not escape it. (Tripathi, Guru, Liddle, 2015).

From the central figure in Buddhism we will move to Warren Buffett. One of the central economies of the second half of the 20th century - the 21st century. (Shafique, Loo-See 2018; Bohl, 2019; Solomon, Steyn, 2017; Awasarikar,2015).

Buffett's flexibility is reflected in the recognition that each person he is addressing has a unique personality structure and other desires. In accordance with this recognition, he encourages his students to act courageously according to their unique desires. *(Wartiovaara, 2011, Jaffer 2013*). “*Warren always gave students advice to pursue their passion* “*(p.647*)

Buffett describes a formative event that changed his entire approach in investment matters. (Patel, 2018). The idea arises in his annual letter of 2013 (*p. 20*) where he relates that in 1949 he bought Ben Graham's book, ***The Intelligent Investor***. Graham's ideas (Gabriel 2008) were brought forth elegantly and simply and in a logical process without Greek letters or complicated formulas. The impression of simply conveying the message seems to motivate Buffett to do the same and disseminate his insights in an easy and clear way, and above all, in a flexible manner adapted to time and place. One of Buffett’s ten tips appears on YouTube under the name, ‘Warren Buffett's Most Inspirational Speeches’, and it is, “*Keep it Simple”*.

In the annual reports, (Lynch., Bogle., Ellis., Fridson & Fisher 2005). one can discern the flexible line that Buffett describes. Here are some examples: Already in the early 1980s, Buffett says, "*Our abundant capital and investment flexibility will enable us to do everything we think makes perfect sense*" (*1980 report*). Three points are noted for right investment: capital, flexibility and common sense. Buffett saw an advantage in his company's financial stability, because it allowed him more flexibility "Our financial situation offers us maximum flexibility" (*Report 1981*).

Buffett links financial successes (Otuteye,Siddiquee, 2019). with flexibility (*Report 2011*), "*Our flexibility in capital allocation gives us a significant advantage over companies that limit themselves to places of purchase where they can operate.*" When Buffett talks about self-limiting companies, he may be talking about the fact that these companies limit themselves to lack of economic power, but they may simply understand the rules of the game differently. He adds that they limit themselves and we are flexible (*Report 2012*).

An expression of the ability to be flexible is the willingness to invest passive investment in uncontrollable businesses, to activate the organs of society beyond the immediate range of movement and thought. This flexibility makes it possible to seek success in a place that has not yet proven itself,

and other investors have not yet reached. Berkshire's advantage lies in the flexibility with which power is translated into flexibility and flexibility is translated into power. "*Every decade or so, dark clouds will fill the economic sky, and they will be full of gold for a short time, and when such a flood happens, it is necessary that we rush out with boats, not with spoons*," Buffett writes. (Almost the identical 2014 report appears in the 2015 report).

A key part of Buffett's flexible leadership is to teach the people around him to be flexible and adapt to changing situations and environments.

If so, the flexible leadership model, as reflected in Maimonides' leadership style, could well be a tool for researching more leaders "from Buddha to Warren Buffett."

## **Conclusion**

The flexibility of a leader is expressed by a multi-dimensional structure that contains a variety of dynamically activated forces and changes in a context-dependent manner. This type of leadership requires a high level of emotional intelligence, logic, intuition, ability in interpersonal interaction, ability to assess a situation, adjust to it, and to adopt the correct course of action. A leader who possesses these abilities can convince a wide range of people to trust and follow him. His influence will take into account the nature of the audience being addressed. flexibility of a leader requires deep recognition of the person or audience to which messages are directed. Without knowing the specific needs and character of the audience to which a message is intended, it is not possible to convey an accurate message.

Maimonides is one of the most significant figures for the Jewish people. He led diverse audiences through his many writings. He wrote a monumental book containing all Jewish religious laws (*Mishneh Torah*) that was designed for the entire Jewish people, and a philosophical book (*Guide for the Perplexed*) for scholars for whom philosophical questions make their religious beliefs difficult. In addition, Maimonides wrote letters to various communities suffering from crises and especially crises of faith. He also wrote letters to individuals with hardships. Beyond the quantity, quality, and depth of Maimonides’ writings, the wide range of people to whom he wrote indicates that his leadership ability can be explained by the model of Flexible Leadership. In many ways Maimonides is the ideal type of flexible leader. The fact that Maimonides was the Jew who determined, firmly, that Judaism was based on dogmatics does not diminish Maimonides' flexible leadership style. An analysis of his leadership style provides an opening for research on other leaders through the FLC model.

Leadership Model can be a tool for explaining leadership and leaders from different times and disciplines and for that we added a reference to Buddha as well as a reference to Warren Buffett's ways and actions

**Bibliography**

## Ahn, M. J., Ettner, L. W., & Loupin, A. (2012). Values v. traits-based approaches to leadership: Insights from an analysis of the Aeneid. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 33*(2), 112-130.

## Altmann, A. (1972). Maimonides’ four perfections. *Israel Oriental Studies 2*, 15-24.

Baron, L., Rouleau, V., Grégoire, S., & Baron, C. (2018). Mindfulness and leadership flexibility. *The Journal of Management Development, 37*(2), 165-177.

*Birnbaum, R. (2005). Maimonides, then and now. Judaism, 54(1), 66-78.*

## Dion, M. (2012). Are ethical theories relevant for ethical leadership? *Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 33*(1), 4-24.

## Dobbs-Weinstein, I. (1997). The Maimonidean Controversy. *History of Jewish Philosophy*, (2), 275.

## Fenton, P. B. (1982). A meeting with Maimonides. *The Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 45*, 1-4.

Finkel, A. Y. (1996). *The essential Maimonides: Translations of the Rambam*. Jason Aronson Incorporated.‏

Friedberg, A. D. (2002). *Sarah Stroumsa. The beginnings of the Maimonidean controversy in the East: Yosef Ibn Shim ‘on’s silencing epistle concerning the resurrection of the dead.* *AJS Review, 26*(1), 141-143.

Goodman, L. E. (2000). Maimonides and the philosophers of Islam: The problem of theophany. In B. H. Hary, J. L. Hayes, & F. Astren, (Eds*.) Judaism and Islam: Boundaries, communication and interaction: Essays in honor of William M. Brinner* (pp. 279-301). Brill.‏

Halbertal, M. (2013). *Maimonides: Life and thought*. Princeton University Press.‏

Halkin, A. S., & Hartman, D. (1993). *Epistles of Maimonides: Crisis and leadership*. Jewish Publication Society.

Heemsbergen, B. (2006). *The leader's brain.* Victoria, Canada: Trafford Publishing.

Hoch, L., & Kellner, M. (2012). “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau”: Isaac Abarvanel between Judah HaLevi and Moses Maimonides. Jewish History, 26(1-2), 61-83.

Hoffman, B. J., & Frost, B. C. (2006). Multiple intelligences of transformational leaders: An empirical examination. *International Journal of Manpower, 27*(1), 37-51.

## Hurtado, P. S., & Mukherji, A. (2015). Developing a construct of the leader’s cognitive flexibility: An interdisciplinary approach. *Journal of Competitiveness Studies, 23*(1), 3-12.

## Jacob, W. (2011). Business leaders who changed the world. *Vision, 15*(4), 392-394.

Jia, X., Chen, J., Mei, L., & Wu, Q. (2018). How leadership matters in organizational innovation: A perspective of openness. *Management Decision, 56*(1), 6-25.

# Kellner, M. (2016). *They too are called human: Gentiles in the eyes of Maimonides*. Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University. [Hebrew]

Kiener, R. C. (2011). Maimonides in his world: Portrait of a Mediterranean thinker. *Journal of the American Oriental Society, 131*(2), 347-349.

Kraemer, J. L. (2008). Maimonides: The life and world of one of civilization's greatest minds. Image.‏

Langer, E. J. (1997). The Power of Mindful Learning. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Langermann, Y. Tzvi. (2000) The Letter of R. Shmuel Ben Eli on Resurrection.

*Kovetz al Yad* 15: 41-92.

Lorberbaum, Y. (2002). On contradictions, rationality, dialectics, and esotericism in Maimonides’s guide of the perplexed. *The Review of Metaphysics, 55*(4), 711-750.

Lucas, K., van Wee, B., & Maat, K. (2016). A method to evaluate equitable accessibility: Combining ethical theories and accessibility-based approaches. *Transportation, 43*(3), 473-490.

Maimonides, M. (1910). *The Guide for the Perplexed*. Routledge (Originally work published in the 12th century).

Mazuz, H. (2014). The identity of the apostate in the epistle to Yemen. *AJS Review, 38*(2), 363-374.

Novicevic, M. M., Williams, L. A., Abraham, D. R., Gibson, M. C., Smothers, J., & Crawford, A. L. (2011). Principles of Outstanding Leadership: Dale Carnegie’s Folk Epistemology. *Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*, *16*(3), 4.‏

## Peters, C., & Bradbard, D. A. (2010). Web accessibility: An introduction and ethical implications. *Journal of Information, Communication & Ethics in Society, 8*(2), 206-232.

## Pillay, S. S. (2010). *Your Brain and Business: The Neuroscience of Great Leaders*. FT Press.‏

Seeskin, K. (2017). Maimonides. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy.* Stanford University Press.

Shemesh, A. O. (2018). The physician vs. the halakhic man: Theory and practice in Maimonides’s attitude towards treating gentiles. *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, *17*(49), 18-31.‏

Silver, D. J. (2012). *Maimonidean criticism and the Maimonidean controversy, 1180-1240*. Brill.

Soloveitchik, H. (1980). Maimonides’ iggeret ha-shemad: Law and rhetoric. In L. Landman (Ed.) *Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein memorial volume* (pp. 281-319).‏ New York: Ktav Publishing.

Stitskin, L. D. (1975). From the pages of tradition: Maimonides’s last two recorded letters: Maimonides reveals the real purpose for writing his books. *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought, 15*(1/2), 186-192.‏

Stitskin, L. D. (1977). From the pages of tradition: Maimonides’ maamar kiddush hashem: Historical evidence and halakhic principles. *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought, 16*(4), 95-120‏.

Stroumsa, S. (2004). Maimonides and Mediterranean culture. The Jews of Europe in the Middle Ages (Tenth to Fifteenth Centuries). *Proceedings of the International Symposium at Speyer,* 20-25 October 2002 (pp. 95-104).‏

Stroumsa, S. (2008). The literary corpus of Maimonides and Averroes. *Maimonidean Studies, 5*, 193-210.‏

Wilkes, J., Yip, G., & Simmons, K. (2011). Performance leadership: Managing for flexibility. *The Journal of Business Strategy, 32*(5), 22-34.

Jones, S., & Nieto, C. A. (2015). Developing people for strategic leadership.*Effective Executive, 18*(3), 19-24.

Landin, J. (2017). KEYS TO FLEXIBLE LEADERSHIP.*Strategic Finance, 99*(4), 23-24.

Kreisel, H. (2012). *Maimonides' political thought: studies in ethics, law, and the human ideal*. SUNY Press.

Bonsu, S., & Twum-Danso, E. (2018). Leadership style in the global economy: A focus on cross-cultural and transformational leadership.*Journal of Marketing and Management, 9*(2), 37-52.

Skye, A. Z. (2016). *Don't just sit there, do something: A theological interpretation of the buddha as political activist and peacemaker*(Order No. 10111294). Available from ProQuest Central.

Shafique, I., & Loo-See, B. (2018). Shifting organizational leadership perspectives: An overview of leadership theories.*Journal of Economic & Management Perspectives, 12*(2), 266-276.

Bohl, K. W. (2019). Leadership as phenomenon: Reassessing the philosophical ground of leadership studies.*Philosophy of Management, 18*(3), 273-292.

Solomon, A., & Steyn, R. (2017). Leadership styles: The role of cultural intelligence.*SA Journal of Industrial Psychology, 43* Retrieved.

Awasarikar, D. (2015). A study of leadership requirements for managing global business.*Journal of Applied Management - Jidnyasa, 7*(2), 45-51.

Tripathi, S., Guru, P. P., & Liddle, J. (2015). Leadership insights from the top: Exploring leadership through the narratives of CEOs in india.*International Journal of Public Leadership, 11*(3), 126-146.

Kaiser, R. B., & Overfield, D. V. (2010). Assessing flexible leadership as a mastery of opposites. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, *62*(2), 105.

Yukl, G., & Mahsud, R. (2010). Why flexible and adaptive leadership is essential. *Consulting Psychology Journal: practice and research*, *62*(2), 81.

Yukl, G. (2008, April). The importance of flexible leadership. In *23rd annual conference of the Society for Industrial-Organizational Psychology. San Fransisco*.

Kobler, F. (Ed.). (1978). *Letters of Jews through the ages: from Biblical times to the middle of the eighteenth century* (Vol. 1). East and West Library.

Wartiovaara, M. (2011). Rationality, REMM, and individual value creation. Journal of Business Ethics, 98(4), 641-648.

## Jacob, W. (2011). Business leaders who changed the world. Vision, 15(4), 392-394.

Jaffer, S. (2013). Harnessing innovation in the 21st century: The impact of leadership styles.

Gabriel, G. (2008). All roads lead to graham and doddsville: The evolution of the modern value investor. Jassa, (2), 5-8.

## Lynch, P. S., Bogle, J. C., Ellis, C. D., Fridson, M. S., & Fisher, P. (2005). The Warren Buffett Way.‏ p XII.

Patel, K. (2018). Demystifying buffett's investment success.*Financial Analysts Journal, 74*(4), 25-27.

Otuteye, E., & Siddiquee, M. (2019). Buffett’s alpha: Further explanations from a behavioral value investing perspective

<https://www.berkshirehathaway.com/letters/2013ltr.pdf>

<https://www.berkshirehathaway.com/letters/1980.html>

<https://www.berkshirehathaway.com/letters/1981.html>

<https://www.berkshirehathaway.com/letters/2011ltr.pdf>

<https://www.berkshirehathaway.com/letters/2012ltr.pdf>

<https://www.berkshirehathaway.com/letters/2014ltr.pdf>

<https://www.berkshirehathaway.com/letters/2015ltr.pdf>

1. The authors express their deep gratitude to Prof. Ronit Yoeli Tlalim from Goldsmiths, University of London, for her important remarks and contributions to this article. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)